

The Spirit of the Society¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Friday, August 9, 1861

Let us explain the spirit of the Society.² First, what is a spirit; what do we mean by spirit? Each person has her own personal spirit, distinguishing her from any other, her own way of seeing things, talking, and acting. This is what forms her character. A person with a good spirit will be gentle and charitable; if the contrary is true, she has a bad and terrible spirit. We judge a person by her spirit, *the written letter brings death but the Spirit gives life.* (cf. 2 Cor 3:6) Our good or bad deeds depend on our spirit. One with a good spirit will do well; one with a bad spirit will behave badly; everything else follows. A spirit of pride leads to pride, a spirit of greed leads to greed, just as the spirit of a virtue leads to that virtue. A spirit of penance leads to a life of penance, and a spirit of charity is a spirit of dedication that leads to generosity and self-giving.

This also applies to any religious body³. Each will have a spirit distinguishing it from any other body. – If there is no spirit, there is no body; it will be a mere gathering of persons without any moral link. The spirit forms the Society. After all, it is not the mere get-together of many persons that forms a religious body. No. It is the spirit.

This spirit comes from a grace, a religious spirit, a spirit of holiness. Grace forms it through a saint, a human person, or some work. From all eternity, God first decreed that work and then chose a person with super-eminent grace to lead it. God gave him the power, the wisdom, and the grace. It was germinating within him, like the plan of a marvelous palace in the mind of an architect. The plan was in place even before it was put on paper, already existing before its realization.

This founder was given an inner grace; he was the Society, like a mother with her child. At the appointed time, this man with a mission set to work, and spoke about his hopes. Since what God wants is always realized, he found companions who said, This is what I must do. Or, as he did for so many founders, God empowered his words when he invited, Come. There is no other way to explain the marvels these men were doing in the centuries of faith. Five thousand religious soon gathered around St. Francis of Assisi. Moved by the Holy Spirit, many beautiful vocations came to him when he merely visited a country. It was the same with St. Dominic. When St. Benedict and St. Dominic wanted to construct buildings for the Church, God gave them stones, so that with these stones they could build.

No religious family can exist without its particular spirit, which is a divine grace. Thus, every religious body is distinguished by a specific spirit. Jesuits have a great spirit of obedience and a deep desire for God's glory. On the other hand, Carthusians treasure silence, withdrawal, and solitude; every member of this Order absorbs this spirit, so that they form such a unity that when you see one you see them all. Dominicans are marked by a spirit of penance. St. Dominic's mission was to combat heretics and the great evils of his time. He armed himself and the followers that God sent him with the spirit of penance and learning. The spirit of poverty was what inspired St. Francis Assisi, a beautiful, loveable, and noble poverty that he called his queen. His followers honor poverty both in dress and dwellings. God sent him many followers to help him build this noble edifice in honor of poverty in all its perfection.

¹ Number 360. *De l'esprit. Explication de la règle, Chap. II, Art. 1. (The spirit: Explanation of the Rule. Chap. 11, Art. 1)*

² Chapter II: The spirit of the Society. Art. 1. The Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament shall live the spirit of Jesus especially his spirit of love and sacrifice: their motto will be: All for the Service of Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament.

³ In this context: the word "body" means a society, a religious congregation.

In the days of St. Benedict paganism was yet rampant. He became the patriarch of the West, struggling against the remnants of paganism. His monastic order, with thousands of members, soon became the largest and most ancient of all the religious orders. The Benedictine spirit includes both learning and prayer. Any religious who does not absorb the spirit of his Order will not be a good religious, even though he may develop other virtues.

Yours is not the spirit of poverty or of outstanding zeal. **What is your spirit?** Your spirit must come directly from your king, our Lord. You need not take on the spirit of any particular human individual. It is not possible to found the Eucharist or to make rules for adoration, for the Church has long ago done all this. There is no need to invent cult or adoration, for our Lord has been adored since he came into the world. Our Society is not a new creation but merely a gathering together. The Good Lord did choose one person to initiate it, since there must be someone to start the family and direct it. However, nothing new was invented. Our members are merely Christians within the religious life. Every Christian is obliged to adore our Lord. It is impossible to be a true Christian without adoring the Blessed Sacrament. This sums up everything. Since there was no specific religious family dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, and our Lord wanted one, in due time he selected one person to establish it. He gave this man the necessary grace and power, giving him all that was necessary along the way. God provided the first stone and the first foundation. It is wonderful to see how everything happened. This is truly God's work. It would be inspiring to reflect on the way God brought everything together, bishops, advise received, and so on. However, my Sisters, this would take us too far from our present topic.

Since the spirit must take on the characteristic of service, what will it be? This is a passive Eucharistic love, a pure and exclusive love. Our Lord established the Eucharist only as the memorial of his love. Whoever speaks of Eucharist, speaks of the love of our Lord in all hearts. Our Lord loves whoever is part of the family; it cannot be otherwise. Why? Because in the Eucharist there is only a shining love; everything else disappears. The zeal of our Lord has no more words, his charity has nothing else to do, his hands are no longer extended to give and bless; everything is paralyzed and invisible. Nothing appears except his love, and love must be your spirit.

This is the spirit of the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament. You cannot have another, without becoming strangers. You will not find a more perfect and greater one; nothing is above God; love is Jesus Christ. You don't have the grace and light for any other spirit. If you have the spirit of penance, then go to a congregation that focuses on penance; you didn't come here for that. If you have the spirit of charity, then go to the Sisters of Charity. If you have the spirit of zeal for teaching, or for the sick, then go to those religious orders dedicated to that. Here, there is only the Blessed Sacrament, always the Blessed Sacrament. You cannot escape it. Specifically, **the Blessed Sacrament is your means and your goal.** In other religious orders, the spirit is only a means resting in a past mystery that must be discovered ... God in God. We have only one work to do: Jesus, the way, the truth and the life. (cf. Jn 14:6) He is your means. He is the truth, your light. He is life, your goal. And Jesus Christ is life eternal, now and in the next life.

There is a personal spirit, which is the spirit of the Society. To be truly Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, this spirit should vivify you, and motivate all your actions. Your first thought before your every move, the guide for your virtues, the nourishment for your piety, the incentive for your sacrifices, the life of your life, this is how it becomes clear that this spirit vivifies you. As breathing is the life of the body, so love is the breath of the soul. If love could speak, it would say: My God, I love you; I am doing this for you. We breathe in the air that we inhale; if the breath of divine love within us takes in a virtue, it returns it to our Lord as a gift and a seed.

How will you give life to this spirit? You have it already; our Lord gave you the grace the moment he called you. You felt that grace clearly when you decided to come; you were thinking only about that,

while experiencing joys and trials. That desire caused you pain and suffering. You were afraid that you would not succeed. You were in your grace; it was the condition of your peace. If the Lord began working at that time, now you are living at his feet, then, it was only a grace of calling, now it is a grace of joy. As the saying goes, breathing is easy in fresh air.

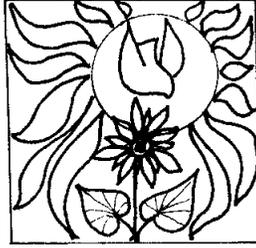
Here you live in the family of our Lord, bringing all your virtues which will eventually become a treasure. You possess the spirit as a seed within you, as a source of virtue. You have already made some progress. This spirit should become a trait, this is the fine distinction between character and a single action. Love must form your character; Eucharistic love must be as natural to you, as it is natural for a child to think about its father and mother; that's its spirit. You should come to that point.

Since this particular spirit is the same for all, you will form one body composed of many members, with the same relationships. Charity forms only one spiritual body of love, with each member fulfilling her duties inspired by charity, because charity is the same as love. How is that? Because there is unity in spirit, otherwise, the body is sick and the devil has slipped in. There may be some wounded organs that have become useless. This is why people described the faithful of the early Church by saying: *they had one heart and one soul* [Ac 4:32], one same charity, one same spirit; this is the character of the holy Church.

The spirit of love is the characteristic of the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Whoever hears about it should say, These sisters really love our Lord, because they are always with him. If this were not true, it would not be mentioned. About you, people should say, They are fortunate, like queens at the service of so great a king. Once you are known – God grant it will not be too soon – you will cast a shadow over the other religious congregations. You are richer and happier than all the other religious; keep your little treasure well guarded. People will learn that you started with the blessing of the Sovereign Pontiff, without any infancy and waiting period. What is even more amazing is that your wishes were anticipated. Of course, there were some interventions and requests, but without the least difficulty. Those who see this will know that there is something unusual here. The Eucharist, in its power of love, has revealed itself in its love.

My poor Daughters, the spirit of love is your spirit. What then should happen? May you breathe in only the love of our Lord. The spirit of a plant is its sap; and it bears the same flowers and the same fruits. The spirit of our Lord, then, should bear flowers and fruits of love. Placed under the force of a press, you should come out a flame of love. Remember this: the rule is only an explanation of the spirit of love; the virtues are only its practice. You should be very happy. A soul with love cannot be tied down. Such a one has the freedom of God. Love is joyful and beatifying. Your joy is to live in love. Love does not know difficulties, impossibilities and pain; like a fire, it burns to ashes even stones and diamonds. It either destroys or becomes one with what it burns. It destroys self-love, and becomes one with all the good within us.

Do you know that you need a very great spirit, a high degree of intelligence to dominate the secondary spirit of the body? I call “secondary spirit of the body” the one that remains in the means. Those religious need a great spirit of prayer to use this means as wings, not as chains. It is right for good religious to be obedient; but this cannot be a center of life. The danger is to allow ourselves to be imprisoned and not go any higher. This is the virtue of a domestic servant, not the virtue of a spouse, which is love. We don't place you in a virtue; we place you in love that is the inspiration and crown of any virtue. All virtues will be asked of you, coming out of love. You have to be poor and obedient, but these virtues will come from love. Then there will be nothing repellent in them; on the contrary, they will be sweet, attractive and lovable.



Point for reflection:

After reading this instruction, recall its essential points in order to assimilate them well. What do you want to remember? Express it in your own words.